

Local Governments Earn ARC Green Communities Certification

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Two counties and four cities in the Atlanta region are the latest jurisdictions to earn Green Communities Certification for leadership in reducing their environmental impact. The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) presented the certifications to local officials at today's board meeting. **DeKalb** and **Douglas** counties and the cities of **Atlanta**, **Fairburn**, **Roswell** and **Suwanee** earned their certifications by implementing sustainability practices and policies in 10 categories, ranging from energy efficiency and green building to transportation and water efficiency.

ARC launched the Green Communities Program late last year to foster greater environmental stewardship by recognizing local governments that invest in programs leading to a more sustainable Atlanta region. ARC's Green Communities program is the only program in the country that seeks to transform a region by promoting sustainability through a "green" certification program for local governments.

"We congratulate the elected officials and staff of Atlanta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fairburn, Roswell and Suwanee for earning Green Communities certification and for their commitment to sustainability," said Chick Krautler, ARC director. "Their leadership in reducing local government's environmental impact is helping to create a greener region."

These six jurisdictions bring the total number of Certified Green Communities in the 10-county Atlanta region to nine. Cobb County and the cities of Alpharetta and Decatur received certification in July. ARC will again accept applications for Green Communities certification in the spring of 2010 and annually thereafter.

City of Atlanta

All new city-owned buildings greater than 5,000 square feet must be LEED certified, and green buildings are encouraged in affordable housing initiatives through the Home Investment Partnership Program and the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. Seven city buildings are under energy performance contracts, resulting in more than 6.6 million kWh saved and over \$2 million in energy savings and O&M cost avoidance in 2008. The remaining buildings will have energy audits completed or performance controls within the next two years. The city's telework policy, discounted MARTA cards and participation in ARC's RideSmart program and the Clean Air Campaign encourage city employees to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips. The Connect Atlanta Plan includes bicycle and pedestrian-friendly policies encourages the construction of sidewalks and a system of bicycle routes. Curbside recycling and yard debris collection are

available to residents of single-family homes. The Power to Change Campaign focuses on individual actions such as water and energy conservation, reducing solid waste and emissions and improving the rates of recycling. The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Report identifies and measures city emissions by source and type as well as recommends approaches for reduction.

DeKalb County

DeKalb's Gregory A. Adams Juvenile Courthouse is LEED-certified and has an Energy Star rated cool roof. Energy performance contracts on more than 150 government facilities have reduced costs by an estimated \$1.5 million annually. The county's lights out/power down policy ensures all non-emergency building lighting and electronic equipment are turned off when not in use and at the end of the work day. Its Green Energy Facility at Seminole Road Landfill generates 3.2 megawatts of electricity from captured methane gas. The county's green fleet policy encourages the purchase of hybrid, fuel-efficient and low emission vehicles. DeKalb became the first jurisdiction in Georgia to adopt an ordinance that requires structures built prior to 1993 to replace inefficient plumbing fixtures with low-flow plumbing fixtures prior to obtaining new water service after the sale of a property. An ozone system at the county jail which converts oxygen to ozone, significantly reduces the need for hot water, detergent and rinse cycles in the laundry. It has resulted in more than \$25,000 in energy savings annually.

Douglas County

New city-owned buildings must achieve Energy Star or EarthCraft Light Commercial certification. Expedited plan reviews and permitting are available for developers planning to build LEED, EarthCraft, and Energy Star certified projects in the county. Low-flow plumbing fixtures have replaced inefficient ones in all county-owned buildings, and all new city-owned buildings must install high-efficiency plumbing fixtures such as WaterSense certified toilets, urinals and faucets. The retention pond at Boundary Waters collects rainwater that is used to water ball fields at the park. Douglas's Community Transportation Plan includes a complete streets policy that calls for the design and construction of roads that adequately accommodate all users of a corridor. Traffic signals have been synchronized to decrease trip time, idling and fuel usage. The county has an environmentally preferable purchasing policy as long as the purchase price does not exceed 10 percent of the cost of a less sustainable product.

City of Fairburn

Fairburn's sustainability policies and procedures are compiled in the Fairburn Clean and Green - Guide to Sustainability in Municipal Operations. All new city-owned buildings greater than 5,000 square feet must be LEED certified. Expedited plan reviews and permitting are available for developers planning to build LEED, EarthCraft, and Energy Star certified projects in the city. LED bulbs have been installed in all traffic signals, and the city has a lights out/power down policy. Fairburn has conducted water audits on all local government buildings and anticipates implementing recommendations by June 2010. All new city-owned buildings must install high-efficiency plumbing fixtures such as WaterSense-certified toilets, urinals and faucets. City policy requires Xeriscaping and drought-tolerant landscape practices at government facilities to minimize the use of chemicals and encourage the use of native plant species. Fairburn offers curbside recycling for single-family, multi-family and commercial establishments. Recycled materials include glass, newspaper, magazines, plastics, aluminum and

bi-metal cans. Zoning ordinance provides incentives for smart growth in residential subdivisions by providing for in-fill, residential cluster and planned developments.

City of Roswell

An Energy Star partner, Roswell's Energy Strategy for the Future sets forth the city's fundamental commitment to protect the environment through the continuous improvement of its energy performance. The city estimates that it will save \$62,000 annually from the replacement of traffic signals and school zone flashers with LED bulbs. The Leita Thompson Park dog park lighting is solar powered. The city has a no net loss of trees policy, and trees that cannot be replaced onsite will be planted on other government property. The Tree Planting Partnership is a public-private partnership to improve tree canopy and density on public lands. It has resulted in the planting of 788 hardwoods and 3,838 shrubs and flowers. Roswell offers commute options to staff that include a flexible work arrangements policy provides for telecommuting, compressed work week and flex time. Recycling containers government facilities are located at individual desks and in common areas for traditional and non-traditional recycling. Residents of single-family homes have curbside recycling, and multi-family complexes are required to provide recycling. Roswell's zoning ordinance provides incentives for mixed use zoning districts and the Midtown Roswell Overlay District.

City of Suwanee

The city's zoning ordinance addresses light pollution and energy efficiency for outdoor lighting by restricting wattage, requiring enclosed bulbs and downward pointing lighting. New city-owned buildings must install high-efficiency plumbing fixtures such as WaterSense certified toilets, urinals and faucets. The Recreation and Open Space Needs Assessment focuses on greenways, and passive greenspace and trails throughout the city connect the community. The Comprehensive Landscape Inspection Program enforces the city's tree ordinance, which includes a continual maintenance clause for trees and landscapes. Properties with approved landscape plans are inspected to insure landscape plan is being maintained. As a result of the inspections, 824 trees were planted in 2008. The zoning code calls for shade in parking lots by requiring one overstory tree for every seven parking spaces. Suwanee's complete streets policy assures that new roadways and roadway improvements include adequate infrastructure, where appropriate, for all users. The community bicycle facility policy requires bike racks for a minimum of five bicycles to be located at all parks and community facilities. The city also requires businesses to have one bike parking space for every five parking spaces.

Complete information about ARC's Green Communities Certification Program, including the measures the certified communities have implemented, an instruction manual and the checklist of measures for which local governments can earn points, is available on the agency's Web site at www.atlantaregional.com/greencommunities.

The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official planning agency for the 10-county Atlanta Region, including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale counties as well as the City of Atlanta and 67 other cities. The Atlanta Regional Commission serves as a catalyst for regional progress by focusing leadership, attention and planning resources on key regional issues.

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